

ASACC's Vice President for the southeast Region, and a student at Thomas Nelson Community College at Hampton, Virginia, who is now a member of AmeriCorps.

In my years at Northern Virginia Community College, I have held several student leadership positions, including President of our Student Government Association, and President of our campus chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, the International Honor Society of two-year colleges. These activities have made me very conscious of how important and indispensable the federal student aid programs, and especially Pell Grants, are to our students in their pursuits of marketable skills and worthwhile careers.

As popular as Pell Grants are, I believe they are underappreciated as an engine of American competitiveness. Higher education as a community should bear the blame for not doing more research to document the economic significance of Pell Grants: but the general evidence is very plain to see.

As you already know, community colleges have become the nation's largest source, outside industry itself, of the advanced technical training (and retraining) that American workers must have to keep themselves globally competitive in the 21st Century, and to maintain the standard of living that most of us enjoy.

Approximately 11 million students of all ages are now taking credit and non-credit courses annually in the two-year colleges, most of them pursuing better job skills. In some states, the community colleges are tempted to boast that they are the largest graduate school, because they now serve more students with bachelor's or higher degrees than the senior institutions of their state.

Roughly one-third of the full-time equivalency of all this enrollment is identified with students receiving Pell Grants, according to estimates we've heard from various campuses.

Spot surveys of former Pell Grant recipients, made by three colleges at ASACC's request, are giving us a dramatic picture of how the grants have enriched the recipients' lives and work paths.

The latest returns, from Pell grant alumni of North Central Technical College in the district of Rep. David Obey of Wisconsin, typically show a very substantial economic return on the federal investment.

With such positive findings among community colleges, which serve the greater numbers of high-risk students, we have to believe that the same survey done by four-year colleges, public and private, would show equally impressive if not more striking correlations between Pell Grants and post-college success. We believe higher education owes the Congress broader and deeper data in this vein. Pell Grants have helped about three times as many Americans pursue their American Dream, as the four separate GI Bills have. We regard Pell Grants as the best competitiveness policy Congress has yet devised, and colleges essentially have been taking the program for granted.

Summing up our concerns, we emphasize the importance of smaller Pell Grants in community colleges. Our commuter and part-time enrollments are significantly higher than those of four-year colleges. Willie wants to elaborate on this point. Congress will undercut both national competitiveness and the American Dream if it caps either Pell Grant funding or the total awards. The threshold grant should remain \$400, and the grant maximum should be increased again.

Funding should also be increased for Work-Study. The benefits could be spread to greater numbers of needy students, if the local matching requirement were increased by 5 percent. Innumerable low-income students

taste their first real employment through campus work-study.

I cannot close without expressing deep concern over the expiration of tax code Section 127. The very modest federal contribution to Employee Education Assistance—modest in relative terms—has proven to be another powerful engine of competitiveness. We are actively supporting H.R. 127, which would restore EEA permanently. Because of their low cost, community colleges are the most frequent choices among workers using this incentive to upgrade their job skills. It will be a sad step backward for both the American Dream and workforce productivity if this Congress fails to reinstate Section 127 retroactively.

This policy should never be mistaken for federal give-away—employers are not about to waste tuition payments on workers who can't benefit from the courses they want. I wish I could recall the source of data a decade or so ago that showed that workers who have either two-year or four-year degrees have careers several years longer than those with only a high school diploma or equivalency. Ignoring any promotions, the added federal taxes from those longer careers would alone repay the "revenue foregone" a hundred-fold or more.

As students, we will do our best to answer your questions. We respectfully ask that the record of this hearing include the ASACC statement of priorities for this session of Congress.

Again, we thank you for investing our testimony.

THE HONORABLE DON RITTER:  
HELPING THE PEOPLE OF AF-  
GHANISTAN BUILD A BRIGHTER  
FUTURE

HON. CHARLES WILSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 3, 1996

Mr. WILSON. Mr. Speaker, I have devoted a significant amount of effort over the years assisting the people of Afghanistan in their struggle for freedom and peace. During difficult periods and in pivotal policy debates, I could always count on a key Member of Congress—Don Ritter. Hence, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to a remarkable individual who has consistently stood with the people of Afghanistan and other freedom loving peoples worldwide during some of their darkest hours and most critical battles. For well over a decade, I have had the distinct honor and pleasure of working with the Honorable Don Ritter, an aggressive champion for freedom and human rights.

As one of the leading congressional proponents of United States assistance to the people of Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion and occupation, Don Ritter continues to seek to build international support for solutions to Afghanistan's problems. Don Ritter is now forging the Washington, District of Columbia-based, Afghanistan Foundation. Ritter seeks to build his organization into a national and international vehicle that will help to bring peace, stability, and prosperity to Afghanistan.

Don Ritter was a leader of the American effort to help the people of Afghanistan throughout the 1980's, working closely with Afghan community and resistance leaders here and abroad. He was the first Member of Congress to act publicly using his position as senior

member of the Congressional Helsinki Commission to engage that body in the Afghan human rights and policy debate.

To discuss founding the Afghanistan Foundation, Ritter will be hosting a historic meeting on October 14th in Laguna Beach, CA, with a number of important Afghans who share his vision to help build a brighter future for Afghanistan. Among those attending this special event will be representatives from a variety of Afghan organizations as well as Afghan community and business leaders, professionals, scholars, and artists.

Ritter was the founder of the Congressional Task Force on Afghanistan, the only high level body in Congress to give consistent voice, both public and private, to the cause of freedom for Afghanistan. In this capacity, he helped lead the fight in Congress for humanitarian and military aid to the people of Afghanistan. Congressman Ritter organized a series of historic meetings of task force members with top governmental officials having responsibility for the Afghan assistance program. The Congressional Task Force on Afghanistan played a major role in moving United States policy toward a higher level of positive and practical involvement that helped free Afghanistan from the Soviet military occupation.

Today, Ritter believes that the time has come for the same kind of application of United States policy and influence to help free the people of Afghanistan from the terrible violence and division that have pervaded that country. He sees the Afghan community worldwide as increasing its influence in the professional and business world and ready to assume substantial new responsibility to contribute to Afghanistan's future. The Afghan people have an important and valuable friend in Don Ritter. I salute his efforts to help them bring about a brighter future for their nation.

SPEECH BY JOHN HOLUM, DIRECTOR, U.S. ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT AGENCY, ON THE COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 3, 1996

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, since the President signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty at the United Nations on September 24, 1996, there are already 100 countries which have followed the U.S. lead. This is truly a significant achievement of this President and his team led by the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Such a diplomatic tour de force would not have been possible without the dedicated efforts and personal involvement of the Secretary of State, Warren Christopher and John Holum, Director of ACDA, who were helped by many others in and out of the U.S. Government, not to mention the contributions of many other nations and individuals.

This unique achievement was the subject of a speech by Mr. Holum at the American Bar Association on September 26, 1996. Mr. Holum, in his speech, clearly articulates the CTBT's contribution toward erecting a mighty political barrier to any more nuclear explosions